

Martin Luther's Revolutionary Theology of Pure Gift without Reciprocation

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Despite the plurality of divergent, often completely opposing and competing streams of reform in the sixteenth century, it makes sense to use the singular, "Reformation." This word has a pragmatic and not confessionally biased meaning if by "Reformation" one understands that cluster of communications, conflicts, and significant events that led in the first half of the sixteenth century to an anti-Roman transformation of the Christian church in the West. Through the establishment of the Evangelical communities, a new religious structure emerged without pope, cardinals, and priesthood, without monks and nuns, without merit and satisfaction, vows and fasts, without the ideal of virginity and celibacy, without purgatory, without the propitiatory sacrifice of the mass, indulgences and preparing for the next world through endowments, without prayer to Mary and the saints, without the cult of relics, adoration of the host and tabernacles for it or Corpus Christi Day, without cultic icons, processions and pilgrimages, without holy persons and objects such as holy water or incense, without last rites.

To be sure, essential foundations of the old church structure remained intact, above all the common, normative basis of the Old and New Testaments, the ancient church's confessions of faith and the rite of baptism with its Trinitarian baptismal formula. Taken as a whole, however, a new Christian expression arose: with new translations of the Bible (in place of the rejected Vulgate), new confessions, new catechisms, orders for the church and care of the poor, new hymns and iconography expressing the faith, and a new legal structure, where in its marriage law above all pastoral marriage was the expected norm. It is well known that already on 10 December 1520 at Luther's instigation the books of canon law, the legal basis of the Roman Church, were consigned to the flames before the Elster Gate in Wittenberg—a symbolic and programmatic action of desacralizing and making heretical of the previous ecclesiastical structures.

It seems legitimate and sensible to me to label this religious and ecclesiastical upheaval of the Reformation a “revolution,” as long as one does not mix the concept of revolution unnecessarily with violent overthrow of political power structures. To be sure, as references to Thomas Müntzer, the so-called Peasants’ War and the “Anabaptist Kingdom” of Münster demonstrate, there were revolutionary tendencies in this narrower sense of “revolution.” For the most part, however, the Reformation was a revolutionary upheaval of the existing theological, devotional, ritual-cultic and ecclesiastical-legal supports of the Christian world, an upheaval that more often stabilized rather than weakened the existing understanding of governmental power.

If one understands the Reformation as revolution in this sense, as a religious and ecclesiastical break in the system over against the Roman Catholic structures of meaning and legitimation, and if one wants to take the measure of what radical and wide-spread theological, practical, cultic, and historical changes were contained in this upheaval, then it is crucial to analyze the Reformation’s new understanding of gift and therewith its new understanding of gospel, grace and salvation, justification, faith and good works.

On the one hand, not all of those inclined toward Reformation participated in this radical new understanding of the gift of salvation, as it is found in the early Luther of 1513–1520 and later, most incisively in John Calvin. A person could *de facto* operate as a reformer without participating fully in this profound religion-historical change in its total “one-sidedness,” which will be depicted in the following. The reasons for this will also need to be investigated. On the other hand, however, the Reformation’s new understanding of gift was not simply one important aspect of change among other equally important points of break and reform. In contrast, it stood at the very beginning of Luther’s reformative new orientation as the central perspective of his entire theological work, and it spread out from there to all other levels and parts of his reform thought and action. Luther’s beginning point with the Trinity as the only giver of grace and forgiveness, justification and salvation, and with sinners as recipients completely *gratis* and without any activity on their part also commanded a central place beyond his own theology throughout

all areas of the Reformation. This can be recognized clearly in the catalogue compiled above, which demonstrates what the Reformation did away with and what the Roman Catholic tradition held and holds to be holy and precious. The Evangelicals could and of necessity did reject as anti-Christian all of these things, in particular all forms of provision for the next world and all notions about consecrated, sacred persons or objects, because these were incompatible with their faith in the purely divine gift of salvation without human gift in return—that is, also excluding the cooperation of a sacral, disposing potency arising from people, objects, words or rituals claiming to bestow grace. Because they understood themselves, although sinners, as unconditionally taken up into salvation by God, completely independent from all creaturely qualities, activities and holiness, they therefore did not need a salvation mediated through a religious hierarchy, saints, rituals, sacral substances or activities directed toward providing for the next world. Thus, they also did not need things that lightened these burdens, such as indulgences. Because in the view of the Evangelicals all of these forms for mediating grace and salvation impinged upon the absolute sovereignty and purity of the exclusive, divine gift, they were considered by them as “worship of false gods” and “idolatry.” For the Evangelicals, the only kind of mediation of salvation that remained valid was that which through its symbolic nature and actual implementation of its words and signs exclusively made present the Trinitarian God as the only giver and author of redemption and which, at the same time, rejected every human, creaturely cooperation in salvation. This included in particular the means of Holy Scripture, the proclamation of law and gospel, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the catechisms, songs and, in Lutheranism, also the visual depictions of biblical doctrine and faith.

If there was a truth criterion of content for theology and church in the reformation of, say, a Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Bucer, Bugenhagen, Brenz, Bullinger or Calvin, one that would guide both the biblical hermeneutic and the anti-hierarchical understanding of the Christian community, then it was the teaching of salvation, under the aegis of a theology of justification, as “pure gift without a gift in return.” At stake in this statement was the very center and

entirety of the Evangelical *raison d'être*. This teaching formulated in ever-new approaches what might be thought of as both the middle and also the boundary of Reformation proclamation. Wherever the Reformation's exclusive formulae of *sola Scriptura*, *solus Christus*, *sola gratia* and *sola fide* form a common intersection of content, the central theme of theology, proclamation, worship and piety is the exclusive sovereignty of the divine gift without any human cooperation whatsoever.

What this purity, exclusivity and sovereignty of the divine gift and, on the contrary, the complete passivity of human reception means (and does not mean) according to a Reformation understanding can best be elucidated in comparison to late-medieval religiosity, whose understanding of gift remained authoritatively in force for sixteenth-century Roman Catholicism before and after the Council of Trent.

The Traditional Roman Catholic Logic of Exchanging Gifts

The traditional religiosity of western Latin Christianity, from which the Reformation critically distanced itself, played itself out in the confines of the logic of gift-giving and reciprocating, which has often been described in anthropological, ethnographic, cultural and religious historical studies.¹ That is, it played itself out in the confines of a multifarious religious logic, on the one hand primitive (archaic) and on the other completely modern, in which a high level of anthropological plausibility inheres because it apparently matches particular "natural" and "primary religious" fundamental needs of the human being.² It shaped the history of Christianity from its beginnings but experienced a heightened acceptance in the early and late Middle Ages. This logic implies that there is no such thing as an unconditional gift or grace, no behavior without punishment³ and no pardon without reparations and atonement. Within this web of religious meaning the relationship between God and the human being is ordered principally according to the rules of a barter economy of gift and reciprocal gift ("*Do ut des*," I give so that you give),⁴ sacrifice and atonement, merit and reward, deed and sentence.

In the religious context before the Reformation, this means that “gift and reciprocal gift”—that is, the divine turning toward the sinner with grace and the responsive behavior of the grace-filled person in the form of spiritual acts of love and contrition and of external good works—established an obligatory relationship between the partners. When God gives to the human being the gift of a natural life through creation and gives the grace-filled gift of rebirth for a spiritual life (through baptism to the one tainted by original sin and through absolution and justification to the repentant individual in a state of mortal sin), God is obligating each person to an active existence of true love of God and neighbor. By means of the supernatural habit of grace infused into the soul of the baptized child or adult penitent, God bestows on the human being the inner power of virtue for bringing forth acts of pure love toward God.

The initial gift of grace from God makes a person capable of receiving gifts. In this process of changing someone from a sinful to a holy life, God’s mercy plays a key role, because only grace can so transform sinners that at the end of their lives they can display before God, the judge, their good works as the return on the gift of salvation. Alongside this, however, Jesus Christ also plays a key role in this reciprocal gift relationship. For God the Father offers the atoning sacrifice of his Son within the context of this governing logic (“no forgiveness without an atoning exchange”) as the legal basis for being able to pardon the guilt and eternal punishment of sinners, to infuse them with saving grace and, at the last, to accept this return on the gift of a sanctified life and thus reward them with eternal salvation.

Therefore, the relation between God and human beings according to this medieval understanding—measured by this religion-historical logic outlined above—is a mutual relation of obligations. On the one side, as I have shown, through divine gifts God commits the created and reborn individual to the reciprocal gifts of a sanctified life. On the other side, through inner and outer actions of genuine love of God and neighbor, the human being who lives this way turns God into one indebted to giving the reciprocal heavenly gift for good works.⁵ In view of the obligatory effect of works, medieval theologians speak of their meritorious character. And vice versa:

because in dependence on the Latin patristic tradition and the terminology of Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) and Peter Lombard (d. 1160) these theologians are inclined to label these good works of the justified individual as merits (*merita*),⁶ it was common to say that these very works make God indebted to give heavenly blessedness as the appropriate reward.⁷ By the end of the twelfth century the following definition prevailed: “to merit means making something owed out of something not owed” (*mereri est de indebito debitum facere*).⁸

Given the absolute transcendence of God over against all creation, scholastic theologians realized that only in a simulated sense that excluded any heteronomy in God can one speak about obligation or debt in God and the meritorious nature of human works. As a result, they could only use this entire field of terms (*obligare/obligatio, debere/debitum/debitor, merere/mereri/meritorius/meritum*) under the assumption that they understood the binding of God as a free, sovereign binding and anchored it in his actual, bountiful essence, in his reliable faithfulness to his covenant and in the particular worth of his own efficacious grace working in human beings. On this foundation, the theological grounding for the relation, arising out of merit and obligation, between human gift and God’s reciprocal gift took two main directions from the thirteenth century until the Reformation.

The trajectory of arguments originating particularly from Thomas Aquinas⁹ put the main emphasis on the grace-filled qualities of works of love brought about in the justified person by the Holy Spirit. Through the infused habit of grace God himself lifted this gift transaction of the reborn person from beginning to end into the supernatural, holy level of being, which makes it worthy of a supernatural, heavenly reward and thus meritorious. God “owes” a reward only in the sense that he allows the quality of the gift, which he himself gave, to reach the goal of reward that he himself set for it.

The other trajectory, originating particularly from the Franciscans, Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus,¹⁰ did not begin with the particular quality of the work of sanctification but instead stressed contrariwise the infinite qualitative difference between all creaturely works and God’s gift of salvation. Out of free, sovereign goodness,

however, God made himself into a covenant partner, indeed, almost into a kind of business partner. Out of pure mercy and voluntarily, God condescended to make with human beings a covenant or agreement (*pactum, conventio*) that promises reward for their good works, which are done out of love of God and the neighbor, even though they are in and of themselves not capable of being meritorious. Through the power of this self-binding of God and its covenant promise, the righteous works achieve the value of a gift that makes God indebted to give a reciprocal gift. Thus, these works have, *ex pacto*, a meritorious value, in mercantile terms, a “buying power” for the next world.¹¹ In point of fact, several theologians from the twelfth century on—during the very time of the economic transformation in the flourishing cities of Western Europe from an agrarian, barter economy of feudal living arrangements to an increasingly moneyed economy organized around trade—compare meritorious works with near worthless coins, which on the basis of the contractual framework possess more buying power. At the same time, the heavenly reward is compared to highly valuable coins that are earned with a minimum of effort.¹² The point of this theological comparison to money thus lies in the discrepancy of value between effort and reward and, at the same time, in an existing relation of obligation, righteousness and merit.

On the one hand, the basis for this meritorious “gift exchange” arising from the contractual self-binding of God could theologially speaking point to a strong accentuation of the enormous generosity and never-ending goodness of God and of the unworthiness of the properly humble human being, all of whose pious works were worthless without God’s contingent contractual decree of reward. On the other hand, this contractual thinking could strengthen mercantile dealings with God and the next life according to the logic of an exchange of goods, that is, to an economization of the relation to God that without a doubt was not far from the commercial religiosity of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. That this relation between God and humanity has to do with a completely imbalanced exchange of gifts (the boundless worth of heavenly glory and the worthless earthly works) was not able to disturb this mercantilistic logic. After all, in this kind of logic rested the

maximization of profit, to earn the most with the smallest possible investment. Seen in this way, the divine commercial partner opens up to humanity the possibility of an extreme, profit-oriented return on business, if only it invested with its gifts.

In 1501, the provost at the St. Laurence Church in Nuremberg, Dr. Sixtus Tucher, could seek to comfort the nun, Caritas Pirckheimer, in her grief at her father's death by comparing Christian life and death to a profitable commercial business. The wording of his letter leaves traces from the familiar background of the household of a patrician cloth seller and from the bourgeois expectations of wealthy merchants. "We should not grieve when a person has merited to return from foreign climes to his homeland . . . , from the temporal into the eternal, and especially when a person has attained many good works through blissful commerce [*Kaufmannschaft*]. For this reason, then, we have all come like merchants in our pilgrimage through this world, so that with temporal goods we obtain an eternal profit and interest."¹³

In the gift theology and piety of the two centuries prior to the Reformation, one may observe deep tensions between the following two opposing tendencies. On the one side, there stands a sometimes massive calculation of economic trade with the "currency exchange" of "temporal goods exchanged for heavenly ones"¹⁴ and with an unabashed mercantile terminology that formulates the goal in the language of the titans of commerce. Thus, one reads of "purchasing," "acquiring," "gaining" and "earning" heaven and of satisfying the temporal punishment for sin in this world and in purgatory by setting up charitable foundations and purchasing indulgences.¹⁵ On the other side stands a strong tendency towards spiritualizing, internalizing and centering on grace, which opposes this crass mentality of exchange, obligation and merit and which makes clear the continued weakness of sinners, the insufficiency of their works,¹⁶ their permanent dependence on the mercy of God (a mercy that surpasses any righteousness based upon reward) and the Judgment that allows grace to precede justice.¹⁷ With such a God, one should not, like a bank director, do business and calculate profit; instead, pitiable human beings may and should entrust themselves to God's unfathomable goodness.

Theologians following this second path—especially ones from Luther’s order of Augustinian Hermits—were then able to connect this deep stress on the dominance of grace to a very pointed doctrine of the bondage of humanity.¹⁸ See, for example, in the fourteenth century the influential Augustinian Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358) and, right before the Reformation, Johann von Staupitz (d. 1524) the head of Luther’s order, his teacher and confessor.¹⁹ In this respect they opposed a broad majority opinion, which taught that the sinful human creature, despite the weakness of its natural powers of intellect and will, retained nevertheless a freedom of choice to decide either for or against God’s saving, life-changing and justifying grace. This notion of a self-empowering, human ability to decide (*liberum arbitrium*) put into humanity’s hands, like Hercules at the crossroads, a key to its future destination—blessedness or damnation—even when its virtuous works became meritorious and satisfactory only through God’s grace and only in connection with Christ’s redemptive work. Seen from the perspective of the theology of gift, this doctrine of free choice supported a religious, mercantile mentality of exchange and acquisition. Opponents to this majority opinion placed predestination, the eternal gracious election of God, over against this—in light of grace and salvation—extremely questionable *liberum arbitrium*. Whom God had elected before all time for Christ’s sake, God inevitably gave justifying grace and, of necessity, led to heavenly blessedness.

When scholars distinguish between these two basic tendencies of late-medieval gift religiosity—one tendency that lays the main emphasis on the capability of the human being to use these gifts before God for doing good works and the other that emphasized the prevenient gifts of God’s grace and mercy, who is the “fountain of all good gifts,”²⁰ then it becomes immediately clear that the Reformation takes up and furthers a particular strand of gift religiosity from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, namely, the strong dynamic of a forceful, theologically unfolded religiosity of mercy and grace, especially centered on the Passion. Without this late-medieval forerunner theologically sharpening of the idea of gift in the context of grace, especially as it personally came to fruition in

the piety-centered theology of a Johann von Staupitz, the radicality of the Reformation's theology of gift is unthinkable.

Nevertheless, a closer look at this sharpened theological orientation toward grace and predestination in the late-medieval understanding of gift shows that even here the religion-historical fundamental logic of gift and reciprocal gift (*Do ut des*) and the notions of merit and reward remain intact. To elucidate this point, one must begin with a general observation about the relation of divine grace and human activity in the religiosity of the Middle Ages. In this religiosity—whether popular piety or high theology—all understandings of humanity's way to eternal salvation were shaped principally (and, thus, quite variably) by a two-sided structure. The poles of this two-sided structure are the active, self-propelled movement of the human being and the "Grace" (*gratia*), that is, the giving movement of God, which precedes and encounters the human being with aid and leads to the goal of heavenly glory. On the one side, human beings themselves must strive toward reaching the heavenly homeland as self-propelled subjects—through inner acts of virtue in the soul such as faith, love, hope, humility, contrition and compassion and through external good works (*opera bona*) like prayer, fasting and almsgiving. On the other side, these human agents are graciously accompanied, borne, strengthened and led on this way by God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, as well as by the ones God empowers: Mary, the saints and the angels.

According to medieval understanding, these two sides—the human being's own activity with its efforts toward godliness and the divine assistance of grace, above all the internal habit of grace bestowed in justification—always belong together, whatever different stress may given to either side. The role of the bestowal of grace can be maximized and the necessity of a human being's own participation reduced to a minimum. No matter what the perspective, however, it always has to do with a coming together of divine, gracious *operatio* and human *cooperatio*, or of human *operatio* and divine *cooperatio*. The relation between God and the human being is thus always a relation of reciprocal giving, reception and reciprocation, a two-sided structure of gift and reciprocal gift and a logic of exchange, in which to be sure there is no symmetry or equivalence of the gifts. God

always rewards perpetually and completely above and beyond all human merit—this is true for all late-medieval theologians.²¹ But this changes nothing in the basic exchange structure of their doctrine of salvation, which understands that God never presents a human being with grace and salvation as if that person were only passive in this relation of receiving a gift and not an active and receptive subject. Then, too, God never accepts individuals for salvation completely unconditionally and *gratis*; instead, with their heart's movement and works they always participate in final "profit" causally, that is, meritoriously.

An epitaph painted around 1508 by Hans Holbein the Elder,²² expresses this two-sided structure of conditionality and causality found in the medieval doctrine of salvation in stark relief, in that it puts these words into the mouth of God the Father at the individual's judgment at the end of life:²³ "I wish to show mercy to all of those who depart from here with true contrition."²⁴ The heart's movements of a true contrition motivated by the love of God are the minimum condition for God revealing himself to the sinner as a merciful judge. Without the gift of contrition there can be no reciprocal gift of salvation. Genuine contrition (*contritio*) is itself the result of a cooperation of divine grace and the movement of the soul itself.

With this observation, I return to that minority position of late-medieval theology, which anchored the path of the individual to salvation in divine predestination—an absolutely one-sided election that excluded every possibility of human decision for or against grace and the way of salvation. Nevertheless, even this strictly predestinarian model of salvation accommodated itself to the two-sided structure and its logic of exchanging gift with a gift in return, of reciprocal giving and receiving, passivity and activity described above. Even theologians like Gregory of Rimini and Johann von Staupitz taught that individuals travel on the path of eternal salvation through their own personal active going and giving. The primacy in this process rests, to be sure, with God's election alone (*sola praedestinatio*). Nevertheless, in justification God bestows upon the ones elected the new quality of grace, namely, the infused habit of love (*habitus caritatis*), which becomes their own internal possession. That is, in justification the gift, movement and "drawing" of God

(John 6:44) becomes their own to such a degree that it becomes in them the source of their own freely willed movement. The grace-filled drawing of the Holy Spirit is transformed in the human subjects into their own power of spontaneous, unforced movement of their will and actions toward the goal of eternal reward.²⁵ In this way, the operation of God makes human beings capable of *cooperatio* in salvation. They receive this divine work not purely passively; rather, through the divine gift of grace they are empowered with their own capability to receive the gift and with their own ability to act. By these means, the inner acts of their loving soul, particularly true contrition, and the external good works attain a final, causal ranking—regarding both merit and satisfaction—in relation to the reward of eternal blessedness and protection from purgatory. Heavenly glory is thus not bestowed upon individuals *gratis* and unconditionally. To be sure, it occurs primarily because of divine predestination and Christ's redemptive work but secondarily, however, always at the same time because of their own righteous being and the actions that the gift of justification effects in them, always under the condition and as a product of their renewed quality and morality imparted by the capacity and activity of love.

This direction of medieval instruction, which went furthest in the direction of a grace-centered theology (later rejected by Trent), can say with Augustine that in the rewarding of good works after death God is basically rewarding his own gifts,²⁶ because God alone is the one who allows works to become good—in the sense of a goodness that corresponds to his intention. At the same time, however, even this direction clings decisively to the causal connection of merit and satisfaction that links an active “becoming righteous” to the reception of eternal life. There is no salvation without the cooperation of self-acting persons who act without coercion and offer their love as gift. Thus, we are looking at what is, in itself, a quite variable and exciting panorama of a theology and piety, where the common, characteristically “Catholic” profile may be recognized in this: that, taken as a whole, its religiosity holds fast to the religion-historical rule—to be sure, modified and in a moderate, Christian way—of no gift without a reciprocal gift. The philosophically oriented religiosity of early sixteenth-century western Humanism in all of its various

forms also moves within these same religious coordinates of gift sketched above. This finding is not unexpected when viewed from the perspective of the “primary religious continuum”:²⁷ that no unconditional goodness of the Godhead and no unconditional grace and forgiveness can exist without reciprocity. The “secondary” moderation of this logic in the history of Christianity up to the beginning of the sixteenth century did not fundamentally undermine the basic structure of the model of “gift and reciprocal gift.”

Thus, the Reformation’s criticism of the traditional, Roman Catholic religiosity was not only directed against the above-mentioned notions of the relation between God and humanity as one of trade and merchandise but more radically and completely also against non-mercantile understandings of this relation that were sensible to God’s grace. In this context, the important cultural distinction between trade and gift relationships, as Natalie Zemon Davis discovered in French sources of the sixteenth century,²⁸ exists on a different plane than the Reformation’s theological disputes about gift with the existing religiosity.²⁹ The Tübingen professor of theology Gabriel Biel (d. 1495), the preferred target for Luther’s reckoning with scholastic theology,³⁰ viewed the way of salvation with its merit and satisfaction of the justified person *not* as trade with a heavenly business partner but as a loving relation of gift under the auspices of God’s immense mercy, generosity and kindness.³¹

Luther’s New Understanding of God’s Pure Gift

On the basis of the foregoing, in 1500 it would have been completely unforeseeable and unimaginable that a short time later with Luther’s teaching on justification and salvation a mode of religious thinking would for the first time emerge that would completely disengage the relation between a gracious God and sinful humanity from the standard, accepted coordinates of gift and reciprocal gift. This religion-historical revolution is the actual theme of this essay. However, because the new orientation of the Reformation grew out of the existing tradition of doctrine and piety and step-by-step discovered and sharpened its own profile in disputes with the established authorities, these coordinates of

medieval thinking about gift, which defined all aspects of medieval religion and which became sharply normative in Trent, first had to be carefully differentiated and explained. In what follows, I will concentrate on Luther, not because he is somehow the criterion of authentic, Reformation doctrine but because he was the first and, thus, paradigmatically brought to the concept in his early writings what then became generally a standard for a Reformation positioning of ethics in the *ordo salutis*, even given the rich variations and developments of this model in Wittenberg, Zurich, Strasbourg, Geneva or Emden. Beyond that, I can support this depiction of Luther's soteriological understanding of gift upon the foundational and subtle studies of the most recent Luther research. I mention here only those things published since 2006 by Bo K. Holm,³² Philipp Stoellger,³³ Ingolf U. Dalferth³⁴ and Risto Saarinen.³⁵

Building on this work, this essay focuses particularly on the following question. How innovative is Luther's theology of gift against the background of the exchange-oriented religiosity of gift in the Middle Ages and compared to the omnipresent, religion-historical logic of gift and reciprocal gift? In view of the excellent state of research, which however invites some correctives,³⁶ I can limit myself to a brief sketch of the decisive line of demarcation between Luther's thought and the Roman Catholic religion of gift and reciprocal gift, before expanding the view towards the entire Reformation in the conclusion.

To be sure, Luther furthered in large degree specific traditions from his background in scholasticism, mysticism, medieval piety and Christian humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in view of our question particularly the predestinarian tradition emanating from his Augustinian order and aimed against the decisive role in salvation accorded by others to the *liberum arbitrium*. Nevertheless, a comparison with precisely this strict Augustinian way of thinking—itself a thoroughly radical way of thinking—shows clearly and distinctly Luther's break with the entire field of an exchange- and action-oriented thinking about gift and reciprocal gift.

One can express the revolutionary radicality of Luther—in contrast to the system-preserving radicality of the anti-Pelagian Augustinians before him—quite succinctly. God's gift of salvation to human beings,

like the gift of justification, is a pure gift without a gift in return. What was absolutely never anticipated in the history of religions (namely, that there can be any pure, unconditional gift without the giver expecting and receiving from the recipient a reciprocal gift of even the most insignificant or subtle worth whatsoever) is precisely what takes place in the relation of the justifying and saving God to the human being, who remains a sinner throughout life even in the depths of being. God thus bestows the gift of eternal blessedness upon a human creature, who is absolutely incapable of giving and who receives it in pure passivity. God proves himself to be a kind judge without any presuppositions or preconditions, *not* “on the basis of” a prior sanctification of individuals or their capacity for love and contrition—that is, without regard to a qualitative or moral change of the sinner or in reaction to his “good works.” And God acts with the overflowing fullness of mercy, forgiveness of sins and acceptance into blessedness not just toward passive persons but even and especially the stiff-necked and resistant godless people, who revolt against his commandments.³⁷

Thus, in contradistinction to the entire traditional understanding of justification, grace and salvation, with Luther there is no final, causal relationship between the works of the justified, reborn individuals and their blessed state in the next life. The rug is pulled out from under every thought of satisfaction or merit, and with that from every idea of God’s obligatory relationship over against human qualities and actions, too—no matter how they may be conceived. The characteristic combination of God’s indebtedness with the human capacity for merit and the salvific causality of human works motivated by love, as found in medieval theology, was energetically challenged by Luther at the latest in his lectures on Romans from 1515/16. Although he can still use the concept of merit, though very seldom, it is no longer in the traditional sense but completely detached from a salvific finality of works and, hence, only in order to express, on the basis of faith’s underlying trust in God’s unmerited goodness, that a specific human suffering or action pleases God and is thus precious to the believer.³⁸

In the structure of his new theology Luther also recognizes a kind of *obligatio*, indebtedness and commitment on God’s part. He connects this obligation, however, *not* to human morality but instead,

as the unilateral, free self-binding of God and pure covenant of grace, 1) to his promise of forgiveness (*promissio*) in the gospel; 2) to the binding of his grace-filled work of the Spirit through the means of grace in the external Word (Scripture and sermon), and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; and finally 3) to his predestining election. Thus, God is only duty bound unilaterally to himself and never to any human gift. When, as we saw, some medieval theologians spoke of a free self-binding of God out of pure kindness and mercy, they meant contrariwise a kind of commitment by which God obligated himself over against particular human works, in that he promised a heavenly reward and a cancelling of temporal punishment for sins and attributed a certain exchange value in merit or satisfaction. Luther broke with this medieval tradition of a two-sided covenant but also more and more with that other, especially Thomistic tradition, which claimed a direct, causal, meritorious connection between the supernatural quality of love in good works and the reciprocal gift that God owed for blessedness and remission of punishment.

Because of Luther's rejection of the traditional structure of gift and reciprocal gift, and of reciprocal obligation and exchange of merit and reward, the justification and sanctification of the sinner, along with inner and outer actions attain a fundamentally new place in the *ordo salutis*. Insofar as each ethical quality and activity of the human creature is liberated from any salvific economy of exchange and any logic of gift and reciprocal gift, a human being's good works obtain in Luther, on the one hand, a radical, eschatological value. That in the Last Judgment human beings will be judged according to their works and must give an account of these works before Christ, as Luther can stress in later years,³⁹ has nothing to do with an eschatological disposition of good works that involves earning and profit in the traditional sense. On the other hand, by means of robbing works of their power, Luther wants to give them back their true worth so that they again regain their value as truly God-fearing works of love that please God and help the neighbor and are freed from every perversion through a selfish calculation of merit and reward. Thus, later researchers could understand Luther as calling himself the "teacher of good works"⁴⁰ and as the advocate of a true

sanctification of the Christian life, in that he denies to *sanctificatio* and godly works any connection to cooperation in salvation.

This specific Reformation logic—an anti-logic to the religion-historical logic of gift exchange—meant that Luther rejected the traditional medieval catholic view of the way of salvation as a way of sanctifying the justified. According to the traditional understanding of the “way to heaven,”⁴¹ the justification of the mortal sinner possessed no eschatological final validity. In the *iustificatio impii* the sinner is really *made* righteous through God’s gift of an infused habit of grace; only after his death, however, in the individual judgment of each person does the sinner receive final reception into eternal life. Between these two points, that is, between the life-changing justification and reception into salvation, there lies the long path of purification from sin, sanctification, the inculcating of love and fulfillment of the law, works of merit and satisfaction, all of which serve to make the sinner worthy of the heavenly reward. The religious subject, possessing the quality of grace and godly virtues, advances with good works toward the rewarding goal of blessedness.

In medieval religiosity, this way to heaven is, as a rule, a “graduated” way of different degrees of divine communication of grace and blessing and human cooperation. Thus, at the end of the process there is also a ranked acceptance of individuals, based on their capacity for receiving and using love and gifts, in that God allocates to them different degrees of heavenly glory depending upon the intensity of their love and contrition and upon the measure of merit in their works. In the same way the punishments of purgatory and hell are ranked according to degree of the sins. In this way, a medieval gradualism functions in both positive and negative contexts according to the logic of gift and reciprocal gift.

At the time of his lectures on Romans (1515–1516), Luther had already broken with this catholic model of the road to heaven and its gradualism. For him the moment of justification and the moment of acceptance to salvation no longer fall to pieces. Instead, they come together in a single moment, in that he fundamentally rejects the reigning thinking regarding gifts, conditions and causality. He is now convinced that in justification the final acceptance of the sinner into eternal blessedness has already happened—an unconditional

acceptance of human beings apart from any qualities or morality of their sanctified lives. In the midst of their sin human beings receive God's acquittal: "For me you are for Christ's sake righteous and saved, not simply righteous now and one day saved, but already now—before you have or do anything good and apart from having to provide some ability, gift, merit or satisfaction—I give to you my fullest blessing and accept you into blessedness. Let it be said to you and trust it!"

For Luther it is no different when it comes to faith: it lets itself be spoken to and to entrust itself to this remarkable promise of God. Faith (*fides*) is not somehow a subtle preparatory work of the human being but a liberated, joyful ability to respond brought about by God himself through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In faith individuals give themselves over in complete trust, responding to the acquitting word of the gospel: "Yes! It is just as God has promised. I am forgiven all of the guilt and punishment of sin, and as a child of God I am now already, without having to contribute anything on my own, heir of eternal life and received into salvation."

The certainty of salvation, from which (according to the common understanding of scholastic theology) the human creature was excluded,⁴² is for Luther possible and even the central aspect of Christian freedom because certainty no longer has to support itself on any quality, gift capacity or activity of human beings but instead finds its only basis in God's unbreakable promise. In connection with the controversy over indulgences and his new understanding of penitence, Luther arrived in 1518 at a new, high appreciation for the external word of absolution received through the senses.⁴³ For the certainty of salvation from faith, it is essential that faith can and must stand not upon the inner dimensions of the human being, which are always unstable, under attack and unworthy of all God's gifts, in particular not upon so-called "true contrition" but upon the unassailable, unmistakable external dimension of the promise of forgiveness coming from the oral and written gospel and the sacraments.

As mentioned above, Luther viewed the human being as, on the one hand, a completely passive recipient of justification and salvation, in that he denied to human activity any and all relevance for

salvation. On the other hand, however, he also understood the freedom of a Christian as the free activity of the sanctified life, as a freedom to unforced, spontaneous good works of love toward God and the neighbor. For Luther, the decisive transition point between this pure passivity and this sanctified activity of the Christian lies nowhere else than in faith alone.

One must, furthermore, examine more closely this passivity, that is, that the human being's essence is one of passive reception. The gift that the human being receives in pure passivity⁴⁴ is the righteousness of Christ in its totality. This righteousness is reckoned and credited to sinners because sins are not reckoned to them but rather forgiven. Already in the lectures on Romans from 1515–1516 Luther brings this key term of “reckoning” (*reputatio* or *imputatio*) into play to describe this divine gift giving. Moreover, he denotes this imputed righteousness of Christ as alien and external (*iustitia aliena, externa*).⁴⁵ This righteousness is really and with the most effective consequences fitting for all persons but only in this way: given that God credits it to them as a perfect and completely valid whole, it never exists as their own internal quality. The human being, as a limited creature broken by sin, receives this righteousness “only” as a reality “*extra nos*,”⁴⁶ that is, in the mode of becoming entirely accepted and declared completely free.⁴⁷

When people receive this salvific gift passively in faith, they experience in their conscience a liberation from the law, even from God's sacrosanct commandments. This means that while they are not released from the validity or claim of God's commandments, they are instead freed from the coercion and anxiety-producing pressure of *having* to give in return. With this they are also freed both from the expectation of having to fulfill the commandments to achieve salvation and also from the condemning curse of unfulfilled, holy norms that obligate them to pure love of God and neighbor. As believers, they can in all honesty confess their inability to love purely and, at the same time, see themselves always under the protection of the righteousness of Christ. By changing the traditional Mariological motif of Mary's protective robe into an exclusively Christological form,⁴⁸ Luther can say that Christ covers and protects the completely unholy, lost sinner with his perfect, eternal,

divine-human righteousness like a robe.⁴⁹ However, Luther's favorite picture for this external protection of Christ's righteousness is the wings of the mother hen, who guards her weak chicks from the attacks of the hawk—a metaphor for Satan.⁵⁰

This very same faith, however, which receives the saving gift of God in a fully passive way, is at the same time full of activity. Already the act of receiving is itself from the very first moment on an active receiving, a kind of receiving and accepting of the soul that loves God. For Luther there can be no real, living faith that is not from itself (*eo ipso*), that is, according to its own most inner essence, love from start to finish. For faith is, as Luther says repeatedly, a heartfelt trust in God's saving promise for Christ's sake that is brought about in the individual through the Holy Spirit. Hence, faith comes into being as a thorough warming of the heart through the Holy Spirit's power⁵¹ and thus as a trusting love, which is completely love precisely because it expects everything from God and accepts all things from him.⁵² In this way, faith binds the affective side of the loving feeling together with its cognitive dimension of the knowledge of God and self.⁵³ Indeed, faith is the most radical form of love because it relies upon God alone. From the very beginning, justification received by faith and sanctification of the sinner through the Spirit of love thus belong together.⁵⁴ In faith itself the sanctification of Christians and their active giving begin. For they receive justification always only in this way that, at the same time, they love God, give God alone the glory and thanksgiving.⁵⁵ From faith's active relation of responding and receiving then flows from a fountain filled to overflowing by Christ the turning to the neighbor in love and all good works designed to serve the neighbor in all of life's needs.⁵⁶ To be precise, from faith, which is always already a love of God, flow inner acts of love and external, practical "works" of serving God, such as living a chaste life in the body,⁵⁷ and internal acts of love of neighbor and external "works" of serving the neighbor. Besides the metaphor of overflowing, Luther loves to use in this connection the picture of a tree and its fruit (in interpreting Matthew 7:16-20). The fruitful tree of faith and love bears the fruit of good works.⁵⁸ The tree stands for the justified individual,⁵⁹ and the fruits stand for the deeds of the person, deeds arising from both the passive and the active inner

being and that proceed from the body outwardly in service to God and in social service of the believing, loving person.

When Luther and the other reformers speak after 1520 about good works, they are thinking in the first instance not of the works of loving God, which the believer always performs spontaneously (“out of unconditional love”) and throughout life in order to serve and please God.⁶⁰ Instead, they are especially thinking about the works of loving the neighbor. For the relation to God is completely clarified and no longer demands—outside of the relationships with others—any urgent external works of love for improvement.

What I have sketched out here is the concrete, living reality of faith, which Luther characterizes as pure passivity and at the same time responsive activity, that is, as passive and active reception. Decisive for the proper understanding of this connection to life is the following central distinction of Luther, which illustrates his entire theology of gift. What justifies and saves the sinner is never, ever the activity of faith and faith-filled reception, that is to say, not the power of faith to love or trust, not the sinner’s feelings, not the affective fervor or warmth of faith or the capability to self-sacrifice—to say nothing of any cognitive power of faith. What justifies and saves the human being is far more faith in the pure passivity of its receiving. But this means, precisely understood, not faith, not its receiving itself nor its capacity for receiving,⁶¹ but that which the believing one receives—the gifts of God, that is, the imputed, sheltering righteousness of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the reception into salvation for Christ’s sake and the Holy Spirit’s illuminating power in the soul that makes a person receptive at all to the saving proclamation of the gospel. To be sure, Luther can often say that each person is saved on account of faith (*propter fidem*), but his precise manner of expression elucidates this more clearly as, for example, in a comment about faith in 1522, when he writes: Individual Christians “are preserved [*behalten*: saved] through this faith but not because of this faith itself but because of Christ and his righteousness, to which they devote themselves.”⁶² Or again, Luther can clarify this idea using the above-mentioned metaphor in this same passage, namely, that the weak chicks are protected from the

hawks not by virtue of their own trust in the mother hen but by virtue of the hen's protecting wings.⁶³ Because the wings protect them they can have trust.

One can summarize this as follows. Luther completely separated the relation between gospel and faith in the final justification (a person's salvation) from every preparatory, simultaneous or consequent human activity or gift-giving capability, despite the fact that for him the active, giving love for God with its profound trust and joyous thankfulness, along with the knowledge of God and self, belong inextricably to the substance of faith and its reception. Were it otherwise, that is, were the salvific justification of the sinner causally and conditionally bound to the sinner's faithful activity of love and knowledge and to the affective and cognitive receptivity of the sinner's faith, then people—similar to Luther's early years in the cloister—must always be reflecting on the quality and power of their own faith in order to make their salvation certain. But then they would be continuously confronted, contrary to the way of salvation, with the sinful brokenness of their ability to love or know. Then people could never be certain of salvation during their lifetimes. Luther's own experience—the collapse of his pious monastic strivings, his lifelong awareness of possessing no essential goodness of his own that could stand before God and his incapacity for producing pure love and knowledge of God—was the basis for constructing a new theology of gift, one that broke decisively with the reciprocal structure of medieval religiosity and its logic of exchanging one gift for another and that stressed the pure passivity of the believer in the experience of justification and salvation. In this action Luther understood God alone to be the one working as the creator, who recreates sinners out of nothing and against the opposition of their sinful existence.⁶⁴ God takes into his recreative activity the person who is not loving or worthy of love but sinful and damnable, not active but completely passive—a child and heir of salvation—and works in that one all active goodness through his Holy Spirit.⁶⁵

Luther wants to emphasize precisely this when already in his first lectures on the Psalms (1513–1515) he replaced the previously central position of love in the soteriological relation of God and humanity with the centrality of the concept of faith. That is, this concept shifts

the perspective away from the qualitative being and ethos of the human being and toward the relation between the unworthy and a God who declares the unworthy free.⁶⁶ For this reason Luther also rejected the scholastic doctrine of *fides caritate formata* [faith formed by love], that is, the teaching that love is what first brings faith to its full justifying validity. Against this train of thought, Luther carefully separated faith and love: the passive, receptive, not ethically defined, truth-dependent faith and the active, ethically productive, life shaping love.⁶⁷ Even so, faith itself, as the affective state of trusting, is concretely always at the same time actively loving and life-shaping.

A letter of Luther from 8 April 1516,⁶⁸ written while he was lecturing on Romans, may in conclusion help us visualize with his own words the bases of his new understanding of the “pure gift without reciprocal gift.” He addressed his letter to Georg Spenlein, formerly an Augustinian brother in Wittenberg, who shortly before had been transferred to the Augustinian friary in Memmingen. Luther now was worried about Spenlein’s attitude regarding the question of his own righteousness and works. After having addressed at the beginning of the letter a question about a money matter, Luther wrote: “Beyond this, I would really like to know, how it is going with your own soul, whether, having become weary of your own righteousness, you have not finally learned freely to breathe in Christ’s righteousness and trust in it. For in these days the temptation of presumption burns in many people, especially in those who want to be righteous and good with all their powers.”⁶⁹ This is Luther’s allusion to the widely disseminated doctrine of *facere quod in se est* [to do what is in one]: that the human being in relation to God should be concerned to activate the potential of one’s moral powers in order to achieve grace and salvation. Luther continues: “They do not know the righteousness of God, which is given to us so richly and *gratis* in Christ, and seek to work in themselves the good until they have the confidence to be able to stand before God, decorated with their own virtues and merits, which indeed cannot possibly happen. When you were with us [in Wittenberg] you held this opinion, that is, this error, as did I. Indeed, I still have to fight against this error and have not yet defeated it.”⁷⁰ Luther is already looking back at a break in his life from error to knowledge of the truth and

characterizes it in terms of its content as an about face from the delusion of being able through his own doing and working (*in se ipsis operari*) to contribute something to salvation toward instead the insight that the basis of salvation is nothing other than the righteousness of God, which as the righteousness of Christ is given to him *gratis*, that is, without any relevance of a receptive capacity for the gift and without any activity of his own.

At this point Luther comes to the theological core of his letter, in that he argues *ad absurdum* regarding the religious economy of exchange with its swapping of “temporal goods for heavenly ones.”⁷¹

Therefore, my dear brother, learn Christ and him crucified [I Cor. 1:23f.]! Learn to praise him and despairing say to him, “You, Lord Jesus, are my righteousness, but I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what was mine and have given to me what was yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and given to me what I was not.” Beware of aspiring to such purity that you will not wish to be regarded as a sinner or to be one. For Christ dwells only among sinners. For this reason did he come down from heaven, where he dwelt among the righteous, to dwell among sinners . . . From him you yourself will learn that just as he has taken your sins and made them his own, so also he has made his righteousness yours.⁷²

In this passage, Luther attacks the traditional religious motif of gift exchange between God and human beings, in that he reduces it to an absurdity and thus proves the impossibility of any salvifically relevant giving on the part of human beings. For what Christ receives from each human being and takes upon himself that needs atoning is human sin, that is, the anti-gift *per se*. But what he in return grants the sinner is the gift *per se*: his own eternal righteousness,⁷³ forgiveness and salvation.

Four years later in his tract on *Freedom of a Christian* from 1520, Luther designated this exchange between the human sin and Christ’s righteousness—which runs counter to every sense of an earthly economic exchange as well as of religious logic of an exchange relationship between God and human beings—as a “joyous exchange” and “joyous economy” between the righteous bridegroom and the sinful soul, the “poor, despised, evil little whore.”⁷⁴ Luther had already articulated the essential, basic structure of this saving

anti-exchange already in 1515 and 1516 in his lectures on Romans⁷⁵ and in the letter to Georg Spenlein.

Even the well-known division in *Freedom of a Christian* between the justifying and salvific freedom of faith in relation to God⁷⁶ and active love which serves the neighbor freely, joyfully and *gratis* and thereby takes the serving love of Christ as a model,⁷⁷ is already precisely prefigured in the letter to Spenlein.⁷⁸ Indeed, the point in this letter of comfort is determined by this train of thought: as Spenlein can be certain in firm faith that Christ has accepted him as sinner and bestowed upon him his righteousness, so can and ought he now accept his brothers and bear their sins patiently.⁷⁹ “. . . And make their sins your own, and whatever you have of the good, let it be theirs.”⁸⁰ By reaching out to the neighbor with love, the believer allows the paradoxical relation of exchange, which binds a person to Christ, switch into the believer’s relation to fellow human beings. Like Christ, he gives the good and receives in exchange the evil. Luther also expounds the same thought at the end of *On the Freedom of a Christian*: individual believing Christians take the sin of their neighbors on themselves and bestow their own faith and righteousness on them.⁸¹

For Luther faith obtains the task of mediating between two relations of Christian gift exchange. First, faith lives out of the passive reception of the saving gift of Jesus Christ, who in exchange takes the believer’s burden of sin upon himself; and, second, faith actively imparts this experience of exchange and gift to fellow human beings. In this way faith becomes a living source for both the capability and also the action of gift giving by the reborn person—for all internal and external actions in the love of God and of neighbor; yet this entire dimension of faith’s activity does not exercise any influence on the original passive relation of exchange between righteousness and sin, salvation and damnation. The salvation of the sinner remains pure gift without any reciprocal gift.

Ambivalence in the Reformation’s Reception of the New Theology of Gift

With Luther’s writing between 1513 and 1520, a radically new norm of giving and bestowing began in the theological and religious realm. The texts of the New Testament had not placed the theme of

gift in nearly as central a place as Augustine (354-430) later would. After centuries-long, subtle discourse about grace, freedom and gift influenced by Augustine's thought, Luther executed a quantum leap by moving from a minimal human cooperation in matters of salvation to absolutely no cooperation at all. Thus, he developed new criteria for what a gift in its absolute sense really is: a pure giving without the least reciprocal gift, as is only realized in God's gift of grace.

At the end, however, this raises the question of whether and to what degree this theological and religious revolution in the understanding of gift was able to prevail in the Reformation. One needs to consider that the Reformation in general (including Luther) continued to hold to the traditional axiom of gift and gift in return, sacrifice and expiation, "no sin without punishment," "no forgiveness without satisfaction," in that, while concentrating all ideas about reciprocal gift, sacrifice and expiation upon Christ, it did not thereby overcome it. Nevertheless, already this shift of the entire salvific gift onto Christ alone was a revolution of the theology of gifts, because Christ, like the Holy Spirit, was completely subsumed in Trinitarian fashion under the one-sided movement of God's gift to the sinful person incapable of giving anything in return. When the divine person, Christ, became a human being and made the sinless humanity assumed by him into an instrument of his exclusive act of satisfaction through his suffering and death, God's merciful act of giving—his unconditional self-giving into the wretchedness of this world—reached its redemptive goal.

The idea that salvation may be understood in this manner as a pure gift of God, a gift in which the human being participates in a completely passive manner without any cooperation and without any consideration of a capacity to give or receive a gift, was, when viewed against the background of common religious and medieval catholic exchange logic, a remarkable, novel and, thus, deeply alienating proclamation. At the same time, however, this proclamation, with its revolutionary anti-logic of the sovereignty of pure, divine giving, was also one of suggestive drawing power, which was immediately connected with the pathos of liberation. Throughout the breadth of the Reformation, the pregnant distinctions between

faith and love, faith and good works, as well as justification and sanctification triumphed, alongside the associated teaching that human beings are saved not through their sanctification or works of love but by grace alone, for Christ's sake alone, and by faith alone. This new teaching of the free nature of the gift of salvation brought with it consequences in the Reformation's daily church life, which were described at the outset of this essay. The pious gift-giving in Christianity—for example, the establishment of religious foundations—received a completely new sense. Foundations no longer had anything to do with improving one's chances in the hereafter through works of satisfaction—that is, as a representational service on behalf of those in purgatory—but they were instead to serve one's neighbor on earth. This service included promoting their temporal well-being and life in true, saving faith.⁸² In view of the breadth and variety of late-medieval and Reformation church life, one can thus say that the common standards for ecclesial religiosity of daily life and worship ritual changed fundamentally. In the time before the Reformation these standards were shaped by the two-sided structure of heavenly help from grace and of human cooperation to achieve salvation. In contrast, during the Reformation a new basis became established, namely, that salvation was bestowed upon human beings out of pure, divine grace, to which they did not contribute anything of their own and were thus also no longer viewed as capable of aiding their neighbors through a kind of communal solidarity in making satisfaction [for sin's punishment].

More difficult to accept was, contrariwise, Luther's complex teaching that faith itself is salvation and love, that it is not only a passive but also an active reception and that, therefore, the origin and basis of the sanctification of the ungodly rests in justification, even though at the same time this sanctifying, loving, active, gift-giving dimension of their faith does not in the slightest participate in their redemption. Instead, the believers receive the gift of salvation only in their complete passivity and unholiness.

It was fitting to go beyond Luther and even beyond Zwingli and in the united front against the Roman Catholics to distinguish justification and sanctification (Melanchthon, Calvin) or rebirth and renewal (particularly as laid out by Matthias Flacius Illyricus).⁸³ With

this, these and other theologians wanted to make even clearer that sanctification of the believer, which renews and makes the person capable of giving, has absolutely no basic relation or causal connection to the justifying and saving reception of the sinner. But contrariwise it was also fitting—quite differently from Luther—so to combine and even to make equivalent the believer’s faith and love, faith and good works, being declared righteous and being made righteous through sanctification, that the activity of love and renewed being of the believer again fell into a causal connection of a saving gift. This was, for example, the case with Martin Bucer,⁸⁴ and led to conflict in the cases of Georg Major⁸⁵ and Andreas Osiander, Sr.⁸⁶

This brief overview of the instructive differentiations and conflicts of the Reformation demonstrates how difficult it was to sustain the gracious proclamation of a pure gift without the causality of a reciprocal gift in a synchronous and diachronic environment, that is, in an environment in which the mutuality of giving, taking and paying back dominated all gift relationships, even that between God and humankind.⁸⁷

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NOTES

1. See the fundamental study of Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990); translated from the third French edition: *Essai sur le Don* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950). See also Jacques T. Godbout, *Le don, la dette et l'identité: Homo donator versus homo oeconomicus* (Paris: Découverte, 2000); Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998); Alain Caillé, *Anthropologie du don: Le tiers paradigme* (Paris: Brouwer, 2000); Oswald Bayer, “Gabe,” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 3, 4th ed., eds. Hans D. Betz et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 445-46; Fritz Rüdiger Volz, “Sozialanthropologische und ethische Grundlagen des Gabehandels,” in *Fundraising: Handbuch für Grundlagen, Strategien und Methoden*, 3rd ed., ed. by the Fundraising Akademie (Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2006), 30-55. For the discussion between Jaques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion concerning the impossibility (or universality) of the gift, see Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Umsonst: Eine Erinnerung an die kreative Passivität des Menschen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 92-98, hereafter referred to as Dalferth, *Umsonst*.

2. To the (value-neutral) category of “primary religious” (in contrast to “secondary religious”), which the Egyptologist Jan Assmann borrowed from the theologian and religious studies expert, Theo Sundermeier, see Arnold Angenendt, *Toleranz und Gewalt: Das Christentum zwischen Bibel und Schwert* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2007), 20-36.

3. See Arnold Angenendt, "Deus, qui nullum peccatum impunitum dimittit: Ein 'Grundsatz' der mittelalterlichen Bußgeschichte," in *Und dennoch ist von Gott zu reden: Festschrift für Herbert Vorgrimler*, ed. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1994), 142–56.
4. See Karl Hoheisel, "Do ut des," in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990), 228–30.
5. See already (ca. 200) Tertullian, *De paenitentia*, ed. J. G. Ph. Borleffs, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, Vol. I, ed. Dom Eligius Dekkers (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), 319–40, see 323.44: "Bonum factum deum habet debitorem."
6. On Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Lombard, see Berndt Hamm, *Promissio, pactum, ordinatio: Freiheit und Selbstbindung Gottes in der scholastischen Gnadenlehre* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977), 20–25; for a short history of the term "merit" see pp. 437–52.
7. On the idea and terminology of God's obligation and indebtedness (*obligare/obligatio* and *debere/debitum/debitor*), see Hamm, *Promissio*, 417–25.
8. This definition may be found at the end of the twelfth century in Peter the Chanter (d. 1197), who taught in the cathedral school of Notre-Dame in Paris. See the citation in Hamm, *Promissio*, 440–43, especially n. 311. On Peter the Chanter, see pp. 70–79.
9. For this argumentation, see Hamm, *Promissio*, 250–339.
10. For this argumentation, see Hamm, *Promissio*, 41–249 and 340–90. This direction in the tradition, with its emphasis on the free self-binding of God, began long before Bonaventure, namely in the early scholastic theologians of the second half of the twelfth century like Cardinal Laborans (1110–c. 1190) and Peter the Chanter, who both were influenced by the school of Gilbert de la Porrée. This line of thought first achieved its greatest weight in the late Middle Ages through the strong influence of Bonaventure (d. 1274) and Duns Scotus (d. 1308).
11. See Berndt Hamm, *Religiosität im späten Mittelalter: Spannungspole, Neuaufbrüche, Normierungen*, ed. Reinhold Friedrich and Wolfgang Simon (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 301–34. This is chapter 7, "Den Himmel kaufen: Heilskommerzielle Perspektiven des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts," especially pp. 310–12.
12. For examples, see Hamm, *Religiosität*, 311.
13. "Darumb sollen wir nit trawrn, wenn ainer verdint hat, von fremden landen in sein aygen haimat wider zu(o) kummen ..., von dem zeitlichen zu(o) dem ewigen, und sunderlich, wann einer durch ein glu(e)ckselige kaufmanschaft vil gu(e)ter werck gewonnen hat. Derhalben wir alle wie kauflewit in die pilgrafschaft dieser welt ku(o)men seyen, auf das wir mit dem zeitlichen gu(o)t ewigen gewin und wu(o)cher erobern." Full citation in Hamm, *Religiosität*, 302, n. 2. On Sixtus Tucher, see now the work of Antonia Landois, *Gelehrtentum und Patrizierstand: Wirkungskreise des Nürnberger Humanisten Sixtus Tucher (1459-1507)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).
14. The Nuremberg merchant and banker Konrad Groß founded in 1339 the famous Heilig-Geist Spital [Holy Spirit Hospice] as housing for the poor. In the document setting up the foundation he expressed the wish "to exchange temporal goods for eternal ones" ("temporalia bona pro celestibus commutare"). It continues: "How salvific is support of the poor. Such support, while it tries to help the neighbors in their immediate evil, merits liberation from eternal evils." ("O quam salubris est egenorum subventio, quae cum in presenti malo proximis subvenire se agit, a malis meretur perpetuis liberari!"). Full citation in Hamm, *Religiosität*, 335–52, which is chapter 8: "Zeitliche Güter gegen himmlische eintauschen": Vom Sinn spätmittelalterlicher Stiftungen." See especially pp. 335–36.

15. Examples of texts and literature are in Hamm, *Religiosität*, 301–34, which is chapter 7: “Den Himmel kaufen: Heilskommerzielle Perspektiven des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts.”
16. See Adolar Zumkeller, “Das Ungenügen der menschlichen Werke bei den deutschen Predigern des Spätmittelalters,” *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 81 (1959): 265–305.
17. See Hamm, *Religiosität*, 425–45, which is chapter 11: “Gottes gnädiges Gericht.” See also Hamm, *Religiosität*, 544–60, which is chapter 15: “Die ‘nahe Gnade’—innovative Züge der spätmittelalterlichen Theologie und Frömmigkeit.”
18. See Adolar Zumkeller, “Die Augustinerschule des Mittelalters: Vertreter und philosophisch-theologische Lehre (Übersicht nach dem heutigen Stand der Forschung),” *Analecta Augustiniana* 27 (1964): 167–262.
19. See Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *Werden und Wertung der Reformation: Vom Wegestreit zum Glaubenskampf* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977), 82–140, which is chapter 6: “Augustinrenaissance im späten Mittelalter,” with particular attention paid to Gregory of Rimini and his school and Johann von Staupitz.
20. Citation from the hymn by the Lutheran hymnist Johann Heermann (d. 1630): “O Gott, du frommer Gott, du Brunnquell guter Gaben / ohn den nichts ist, was ist, von dem wir alles haben.” With the opening lines of this hymn he stands in the tradition of a late-medieval piety that stereotypically can designate God and Christ’s passion as the fountain and source of mercy, salvation and all earthly and heavenly blessings. See also *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* #806.
21. This is true even though almost all theologians speak of the condign merits (*merita de condigno*) of human beings in the light of the reward of blessedness. Regarding this terminology, see Hamm, *Promissio*, 453–62. At the same time, the following common scholastic axiom holds true: “Deus punit citra condignum et remunerat ultra condignum” (God punishes in a condign manner but rewards beyond condignity). See, for example, Aegidius Romanus, *Sentenzenkommentar* II, dist. 27, quaestio 2, art. 4, responsio: “Praemiabimur enim ultra condignum, et mali punientur citra condignum. Non enim tantum affligentur, quantum meruerunt, et boni plus gloriabuntur, quam meruerunt.”
22. The picture is in the possession of the Städtische Kunstsammlung Augsburg (Inv.-No. 3701) and is hanging in the Staatsgalerie Augsburg. See the literature cited in Hamm, *Religiosität*, 428, note 10.
23. On the church’s doctrine of individual or particular judgment immediately after death (in contrast to the universal Last Judgment at the end of the world), see the literature cited in Hamm, *Religiosität*, 429–31.
24. Barmhertzigkeit will ich allen den erzaigen/ Die da mit warer rew von hinnen schaiden.” The same inscription could also be read on a now destroyed grave stone from the late fifteenth century in the choir of the former Franciscan church in Nuremberg. See Ulrich Schmidt, *Das ehemalige Franziskanerkloster in Nürnberg* (Nuremberg: Nürnberger Volkszeitung, 1913), 18.
25. Johann von Staupitz formulates this in line with the theological tradition in this way: that the good works of the justified, although they are God’s works nevertheless are *formaliter* in the human being. See his *Libellus de executione aeternae praedestinationis* (1517), ed. Lothar Graf zu Dohna and Richard Wetzel (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1979), 124, par. 40. According to the commentary of the editors, in this passage “*formaliter*” means the same as *subiective*, that is, it designates the “*esse in*” the works of the subject, in the substance and essence of the human person.

26. See, for example, Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris: Apud Garnier, 1844–64), 44:891: “Si ergo dei dona sunt bona merita tua, non deus coronat merita tua tamquam merita tua, sed tamquam dona sua.” See Hamm, *Promissio*, 15–18.

27. On the category of “primary religious” in contrast to “secondary religious,” see above, n. 2.

28. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). To relativize this distinction, the following observation is important, namely, that from the medieval religious perspective the theological logic of the gift of grace and the mercantile logic of an exchange of gifts did not imply an opposition but could often be combined with one another. For examples, see Hamm, *Religiosität*, 321–24.

29. For the mentality of the relation of gifts in the sixteenth century, it was a matter of course that a gift in the sense of a kindness (*beneficium*) morally bound the recipient to a “referre” and “reddere”—although by no means in the sense of an equivalent reciprocal gift or of a mercantile relation of exchange. For example, see the humanistically styled letter of Johannes Rosa to Martin Bucer, dated 27 February 1533, that begins with the words: “Quam destestabile sit, mi Bucere, collatum in sese beneficium non agnoscere, non est, ut docear, cum proverbium precipiat apud senem et puerum nullum beneficium esse ponendum, quod alter eius non recordetur, alter referre non laboret; rursus improbum eum esse, qui accipere gaudet et reddere nesciat.” As he writes further, Rosa is conscious of the fact he cannot match in any way the great kindnesses for which he is thanking Bucer. However, he sends him—as a symbol of a reciprocal gift so to speak—a small rabbit for his larder with the request that Bucer should not regard the smallness of the gift but the gratitude of his heart. The letter is a beautiful example of how gift relations function, even in the crass inequality of kindnesses and reciprocal gifts, according to the logic and symbolism of “*Do ut des*.” In this it matches the ways, as in medieval religiosity, the blessings of God are placed in relation to a gift giving by human beings. In this case, one implores God not to look upon the meager worth of the gifts but upon the giver’s heart, gratitude, love and contrition. According to the Reformation’s understanding of the matter, the justifying relationship of God to human beings also excludes this kind of subtle relation to gifts—not only the immensely mercantile calculations of the world of business. In my opinion Risto Saarinen takes too little notice of this in his “Luther und humanistische Philosophie” *Lutherjahrbuch* 80 (2013): 77–109, where he makes the distinction—important in its own right—between gift and trade relationships the key to interpreting Luther’s theological view of the relation between human faith and God’s mercy. The letter of Rosa to Bucer (in the Archives du Chapitre de Saint-Thomas Strasbourg 40 [21, 1–2], no. 22t, p. 545–46) is now no. 664 in Martin Bucer’s *Briefwechsel*, vol. 9, ed. Reinhold Friedrich et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

30. See, above all, Luther’s *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam* (4 September 1517), ed. Helmar Junghans, in *Martin Luther Studienausgabe*, vol. 1, ed. Hans-Ulrich Delius (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979), 163–72 [hereafter cited as MLStA]; *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 57 vols., eds. J.F.K. Knaake et al. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883ff.), 1: 221–28 [hereafter cited as WA]; “Disputation Against Scholastic Theology, 1517,” in *Luther’s Works, American Edition*, 55 vols., eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1955ff.), 31:3–16 [hereafter cited as LW]. See also Leif Grane, *Contra Gabrielem: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam 1517* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962) and Volker Leppin, *Martin Luther* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 101–04.

31. On formulations like *ex sola liberalissima voluntate [dei], ex sola acceptantis liberalitate* and *ex nuda liberalitate*, as characterizing God's relation as the one who rewards human works and coming from Biel, who belonged to the school of William of Occam, see Hamm, *Promissio*, 372–73.

32. Bo Kristian Holm, *Gabe und Geben bei Luther* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006); Bo Kristian Holm and Peter Widmann, eds., *Word–Gift–Being: Justification–Economy–Ontology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

33. Philipp Stoellger, *Passivität aus Passion: Zur Problemgeschichte einer categoria non grata* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

34. Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Umsonst* (see note 1 above).

35. Risto Saarinen, “Luther und humanistische Philosophie”; “Luther and Beneficia,” in *The Reformation as Christianization: Essays on Scott Hendrix's Christianization Thesis*, eds. Anna Marie Johnson and John A. Maxfield (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 169–88.

36. Particularly the essay by Bo Holm (in *Gabe und Geben*) needs some correction in my opinion, where he writes that in Luther's theology even the saving and justifying relation between God and humanity is defined by a reciprocity of giving and thus also in a certain sense one can speak of human cooperation in the appropriation of salvation. As I will show in the following, in Luther's view there is actually an active working and giving in the human being's faith in God. For Luther, however, the *ratio iustificationis* does not lie in the gift dimension of faith. What happens in justification itself is in no case a “purified exchange of gifts” but instead a one-sided, “pure gift” from God. On the corresponding interpretation of Luther's motif of “the joyous exchange,” see below, notes 71–81. On the topic of “pure gift or purified exchange of gifts,” see Martin Wendte, “Leibliche Gabe: Luthers Metaphysik des Abendmahls im technischen Zeitalter” (Dissertation, University of Tübingen, 2012), 310–16.

37. That God bestows upon sinners the fullness of grace, which surpasses and thwarts all of their expectations, does not mean in Luther's view that God's justification does not also provide a liberating answer to their deepest needs, their hunger for grace and salvation, and their uncertainty and anxieties. The structure of human needs is, to be sure, not the conditional framework or measure for God's gift. That is, God gives in overabundance and more than is necessary, but also bestows to all individuals what is necessary to free them from their specific crisis, anxiety and uneasiness. Thus, it does not match Luther's theology but rather the logic of a systematic theological approach of Karl Barth's school when Dalferth (*Umsonst*, 130—see note 34 above) stresses that God's grace is “not the answer to the unrest in the human heart” but instead at the very first “lets [them] remain restless until they rest in God.”

38. Here is what Luther wrote in 1520 about human suffering in his treatise *On Good Works* (WA 6:202–76 [printed version], 9:229–301 [manuscript]; LW 44: 15–114), “But those who in the midst of such suffering trust in God and are completely confident that he is pleased with them consider their suffering and adversity to be nothing but costly merits and precious assets, the value of which no one can appreciate. For faith and confidence render everything that to others is the worst that can happen precious before God.” (WA 6:208, 23–28; LW 44:28) See also, “Look here! You must imprint Christ in yourself and see how God holds up his mercy before you, offering it without any preceding merit on your part.” (WA 6:216, 26–28; LW 44:38).

39. See Ole Modalsli, *Das Gericht nach den Werken: Ein Beitrag zu Luthers Lehre vom Gesetz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963).

40. “Man sollte mich Doctor bonorum operum nennen.” [One should call me the teacher of good works.] I have been unable to find this statement, so often attributed to Luther, in his works or table talk. It matches in any event Luther’s own estimation of his theology.

41. On the metaphor of a “way to heaven,” see, for example, Henk van Os, ed., *Der Weg zum Himmel: Reliquienverehrung im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2001), or the original Dutch edition, *De Weg naar de Hemel: Reliekverering in de Middeleeuwen* (Baarn: De Prom, 2000); Erik L. Saak, *High Way to Heaven: The Augustinian Platform between Reform and Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Berndt Hamm, “Der Weg zum Himmel und die nahe Gnade: neue Formen der spätmittelalterlichen Frömmigkeit am Beispiel Ulms und des Mediums Einblattdruck,” in *Between Lay Piety and Academic Theology: Festschrift für Christoph Burger*, ed. Ulrike Hascher-Burger et al. (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), 453–96.

42. According to many late-medieval theologians, especially the chancellor of the University of Paris Jean Gerson (d. 1429) and those teachers of the spiritual life influenced by him, however, the individual can achieve a firm certainty of hope on the level of the feelings when one humbly and in complete trust accepts the saving mercy of God. See Sven Grosse, *Heilungsgewißheit und Scrupulositas im späten Mittelalter: Studien zu Johannes Gerson und Gattungen der Frömmigkeitstheologie seiner Zeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994). On the distinction between certainty of faith and certainty of hope before Luther, see Berndt Hamm, *The Early Luther*, trans. Martin Lohrmann (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 66–69. See also, on pp. 71–77, the reasons why from 1513 to 1516 the two categories merge in Luther’s thought.

43. See Oswald Bayer, *Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 164–202.

44. See the relevant texts and interpretation in Dalferth, *Umsonst*, 50–91 (Teil C: “Mere Passive: Die Passivität der Gabe bei Luther”).

45. See the relevant texts in Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 54, 99, 243–44, etc. For the later Luther, see Sybille Rolf, *Zum Herzen sprechen: Eine Studie zum imputativen Aspekt in Martin Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre und zu seinen Konsequenzen für die Predigt des Evangeliums* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008).

46. See Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen, *Nos extra nos: Luthers Theologie zwischen Mystik und Scholastik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972).

47. On Luther’s “ex-centric” understanding of the individual that, in contrast to a “substantial” view (in line with the definition of Boethius: “Persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia”) comes into play here, see Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

48. On the picture of the protecting robe of Christ, see Luther’s *Lectures on Romans* (1515–1516), especially his comments on Rom. 4:7 (WA 56: 278, 1–7; LW 25:265).

49. For this way of describing the righteousness of the human and divine Jesus Christ, see Luther’s *On the Freedom of a Christian* (1520), German: WA 7:20–38, Latin: WA 7:42–49, LW 31:327–78.

50. On the picture of the hen and her chicks, see Luther, *Christmas Postil*, exposition of Matthew 23:37 (WA 10.1, Bd. 1:280.11–285.9; LW 52:95–99). See also Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 215, 243–44.

51. For the picture of “being warmed through” (*Durchwärmwerden*), see Luther’s sermon from 9 June 1532 concerning God’s love for human beings. “For it is not possible for the one who feels the fire of God’s love not to be warmed a bit by it and lit on fire.” WA 36:429.28–30.

52. On the characteristics of faith as love of God, see the citations from Luther's early writings in Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 23, n. 70. See also Martin Luther's treatise *On Good Works* (1520): WA 6:202-76; LW 44:15-115). As the editor of the tract in MLStA 2:24 points out, there is a parallel text in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (WA 6:497-573, see 515.29-516.2; LW 36:3-126, see page 40).

53. See, in the previous note, the formulation from *The Babylonian Captivity*, "the sweetest affection of the heart" (*dulcissimus affectus cordis*).

54. To the extent that, according to Luther, a Christian's faith is always also a love of God, one's justification, understood as the process of life, is also sanctification. For this reason the almost canonical sentence in Lutheranism—"Justification is sanctification" (as in Dalferth, *Umsonst*, 50)—needs sharpening and thus correction. It is very true that for Luther justification is always also sanctification, but the justifying—that is, the *causa iustificationis*—in justification is not sanctification but rather saving gift of God in justification, received as an imputation. On this differentiation, see below.

55. Thus, because faith "fears, loves and trusts God above all things," for Luther faith alone fulfills the first commandment. See Luther, "The Ten Commandments," in "The Large Catechism," *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 386-431, see especially 386-92. See also Christoph Burger, "Gottesliebe, Erstes Gebot und menschliche Autonomie bei spätmittelalterlichen Theologen und bei Martin Luther," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 89 (1992): 280-301. See also Martin Luther, *On Good Works* (1520), par. 9 (WA 6:209; LW 44:30). See also, *Freedom of a Christian* (1520; German), par. 13, WA 7:26.13-31; LW 31:352-53.

56. For the picture of this flowing from Christ to believers and from them to the neighbor, see especially Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 27 & 29 in WA 7:35.20-36.10, and 37.16-38.5. The English version in LW 31:327-78 is based on the Latin version in WA 7:42-73. For an English translation of these paragraphs from the German version, see *Luther's Spirituality*, ed. Philip Krey and Peter Krey (New York: Paulist Press, 2007) pp. 87-90. To be cited as Krey.

57. On the works of bodily chastisement that are motivated by the believer's love of God, see Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 20-25, WA 7:30.11-34.22; Krey, 81-85.

58. See *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 23-24, WA 7:32.4-33.28; Krey, 83-85.

59. See Joest, *Ontologie der Person*. When Luther, in the Latin version of *Freedom of a Christian* (WA 7:42-73), borrowing Boethius's definition of the person, (see above, n. 47) chooses the formulation: "ut semper oporteat ipsam substantiam seu personam esse bonam ante omnia opera bona," then he is not using the Aristotelian, scholastic concept of substance but *substantia* in the sense of an ex-centric, relationally defined being of the person, prior to any external, sensible, observable activities.

60. With this formulation, I am summarizing two ways Luther expresses himself, through which he characterizes the motivation for works of loving God, especially through bodily discipline. See above, n. 57 ("gott auch umbsonst dienen ynn freyer lieb") and, in the same context from the *Freedom of a Christian* ("auß freyer lieb umsonst got zu gefallen").

61. This is what Dalferth (*Umsonst*, 57 and 64-68) also stresses with the appropriate citations from Luther.

62. Martin Luther, *Weihnachspostille* (1522), exposition of Matthew 23:37 (WA 10.1, Bd. 1:281.22-282.2; LW 52:96-97): "... wirtt durch denselben glawben behallten, nicht umb seynen oder solchs glawbens willen, Bondern umb Christi und seyner gerechtickeytt willen, darunder er sich ergibt." Calvin also repeatedly emphasizes that faith does not

justify through itself or some sort of indwelling power (*virtus intrinseca*). In truth, God himself and Christ alone justify, because Christ has been given to us for righteousness. Faith in the process of justification is simply an empty, receptive vessel. References in Calvin are found in Berndt Hamm, "Was ist reformatorische Rechtfertigungslehre?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 83 (1986): 1-38. See especially p. 36, n. 121.

63. See above, p. 32, n. 50. In the lines before the words cited in n. 62 above, Luther expands upon the picture of the threatened chicks and the protective wings of the mother hen (WA 10.1, Bd.1: 281.11-22; LW 52:96).

64. See Dalferth, *Umsonst*, 58-65, with citations from Luther.

65. See Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, thesis 28: "The love of God does not find but creates its own beloved; the love of the human being is made from God's loving." WA 1:365.2-3; LW 31:57.

66. See Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 59-84 (Chapter 3: "Why Did Luther Turn Faith into the Central Concept of the Christian Life?").

67. On this fundamental distinction of Luther (in contrast to Martin Bucer), see Berndt Hamm, "Toleranz und Häresie: Martin Bucers prinzipielle Neubestimmung christlicher Gemeinschaft," in *Martin Bucer zwischen Luther und Zwingli*, ed. Matthieu Arnold and Berndt Hamm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 85-106, see especially 102-04. See also Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien III* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 145-46, n. 55-57. On Luther's reluctance to use the concept of love in the sense of the believer's love of God, see the reflections of Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin: Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1967), 548-49 and 746-47.

68. Luther, "Letter to Georg Spenlein in Memmingen, dated 8 April 1516," WA Br 1: 33-36, no. 11; LW 48:11-14, no. 4.

69. "Caeterum quid agat anima tua, scire cupio, utrumne tandem suam pertaesa propriam iustitiam discat in iustitia Christi respirare atque confidere. Fervet enim nostra aetate tentatio praesumptionis in multis, et iis praecipue, qui iusti et boni esse omnibus viribus student." WA Br 1:35.15-18; LW 48:12.

70. "Ignorantes iustitiam Dei, quae in Christo est nobis effusissime et gratis donata, quaerunt in se ipsis tam diu operari bene, donec habeant fiduciam standi coram Deo, veluti virtutibus et meritis ornati, quod est impossibile fieri. Fuiisti tu apud nos in hac opinione, imo errore; fui et ego, sed et nunc quoque pugno contra istum errorem, sed nondum expugnavi." WA Br 1:35.18-23; LW 48:12.

71. On "temporalia bona pro celestibus commutare," see note 14 above and Hamm, *Religiosität*, 305 and 335-36.

72. "Igitur, mi dulcis frater, discite Christum et hunc crucifixum, discite ei cantare et de te ipso desperans dicere ei: 'Tu, Domine Ihesu, es iustitia mea, ego autem sum peccatum tuum. Tu assumpsisti meum et dedisti mihi tuum. Assumpsisti, quod non eras, et dedisti mihi, quod non eram.' Cave, ne aliquando ad tantam puritatem aspices, ut peccator tibi videri nolis, imo esse. Christus enim non nisi in peccatoribus habitat. Ideo enim descendit de coelo, ubi habitabat in iustis, ut etiam habitaret in peccatoribus . . . Discas insuper ex isto, ut, sicut ipse suscepit te et peccata tua fecit sua, et suam iustitiam fecit tuam." WA Br 1:35.24-31, 35-36; LW 48:12-13.

73. See above, n. 48.

74. Martin Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 12 of the German (WA 7:25.26-26.12); Krey, 75-76.

75. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, WA 56: 204.14–25; LW 25:188. On this text see also Hamm, *The Early Luther*, 89.

76. Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 27 of the German, WA 7:35.20–36.10; Krey, 87.

77. Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 26, 27, & 29, WA 7:34, 35, and 37; Krey, 86–90.

78. In this train of thought, the Spenlein letter also anticipates the argumentation using the Christ hymn of Phil. 2:4–8. See WA Br 1:35.40–36.45; LW 48:13.

79. WA Br 1: 35, 37–39; LW 48:13.

80. “... atque ex eorum peccatis facias tua, et si quid boni habes, illorum esse sinas.” WA Br 1: 35:39–40; LW 48:13.

81. Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, par. 29, WA 7:37.16–38.5.

82. Inasmuch as Evangelical foundations supported the goal of bringing others to faith and, thus, to salvation, they possessed a connection to care in the life to come. See the contribution by Gury Schneider-Ludorff, “Der neue Sinn der Gabe Stiftungen im Luthertum des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts,” *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 27 (2012): 277–92.

83. On Flacius, see Bengt Hägglund, “Rechtfertigung–Wiedergeburt–Erneuerung in der nachreformatorischen Theologie,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 5 (1959): 318–337, particularly 326–27. Rebirth for Flacius is that imputed, relational event of adoption as a child of God. Given that Flacius did not content himself with the forensic categories but set the reckoning of Christ’s merit and satisfaction (that is, the forensic teaching on justification) as equal to *regeneratio* in contrast to *renovatio*, he made clear that justification is not simply an external judgment but a deeply rooted breakthrough of the inner person (in faith) before all renewal of the heart that continually occurs afterwards.

84. On the designation of faith as love and justification as sanctification in Bucer, in contrast to Luther, see Hamm, “Toleranz” (n. 67 above), and August Lang, *Der Evangelienkommentar Martin Butzers und die Grundzüge seiner Theologie* (Leipzig, 1900; reprint: Aalen: Scientia, 1972), 104–20, particularly 108–10, 113–16. On the saving relevance of good works, see, for example, a quote from a letter of Bucer to the Waldensians from Oct./Nov. (?) 1530: “Opera nostra bona non sunt, nisi ex fide fiant. Haec si adest, iam salvi facti sumus, [ad] Ephesios 2[:8f.]. Verum ad plenam fruitionem salutis promovemur bonis operibus.” Martin Bucer, *Briefwechsel/Correspondance*, Bd. 5, ed. Reinhold Friedrich et al., in *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), no. 351, p. 72.12–14. This excerpt is typical for Bucer’s mediatorial position, which also demarcated his willingness to dialogue with the Roman Catholic side in the religious colloquies of 1539–1542. He stresses in good reformatory fashion justification *and* being made blessed through faith and yet underlines at the same time and in a traditional manner a certain final, causal and saving relevance of good works. In this way, the Waldensians, whom the letter addressed and who had a strong interest in a consequent sanctification of the believer’s life and in the high worth of good works, could appreciate that Bucer understood and approved them. An interesting parallel to Bucer’s comment in the letter to the Waldensians is found in the common text on justification in the so-called *Regensburg Book* for the colloquy there in 1541. See Hamm, “Rechtfertigungslehre,” 37, n. 125.

85. On the position of Melancthon’s disciple, Georg Major, “that good works are necessary for salvation” (stated expressly in 1552) and on the resulting “Majoristic controversy,” see Bernhard Lohse, “Dogma und Bekenntnis in der Reformation: Von Luther bis zum Konkordienbuch,” in *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, vol. 2, ed. Carl Andresen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 1–164, especially 113–17; Irene

Dingel, Günther Wartenberg, and Michael Beyer, eds., *Georg Major (1502-1574): Ein Theologe der Wittenberger Reformation* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005). In terms of content, the Majoristic controversy was in part anticipated with the so-called Cordatus Controversy of 1536. Konrad Cordatus attacked Wittenberg's professor of theology Caspar Cruciger, Sr. because of his comments that "our contrition and our efforts are causes of justification without which justification is not possible (*causae iustificationis sine quibus non*). See Lohse, "Dogma und Bekenntnis," 113-14.

86. On Osiander's effective/progressive understanding of justification and the "Osiandrian Controversy" ignited by it, see Lohse, "Dogma und Bekenntnis," 125-29 and now Timothy J. Wengert, *Defending Faith: Lutheran Responses to Andreas Osiander's Doctrine of Justification, 1551-1559* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

87. That this way of understanding things, with its "no sin without punishment" and "no blessing from God without human participation" remained powerfully present even in the Reformation's theology and practice is demonstrated in the entire area of the religious signification of earthly needs and worldly prosperity. To be sure, according to the basic tenor of Reformation teaching human beings cannot bring about the salvation of their souls through moral discipline. Nevertheless, Protestant theologians, like their congregations, see a causal connection between sin and the visiting of earthly punishment by God or, alternatively, between a disciplined life and the earthly blessings of God. Through collective catastrophes like plague, crop failures, and war, God punishes the sins of individual members of the community, so that through prayer and moral discipline one must mollify him to act graciously and thereby insure his blessing, the underlying requirement for worldly prosperity.